

22D MEU(SOC) supports troop lift from Iraq, BLT 3/8 Engineers fix up training range

Since my last update, the Marines and Sailors of the 22d MEU(SOC) have remained very active aboard the training facilities of Camp Buehring, Kuwait. While our main focus has been sustainment training, the MEU also supported a real-world mission to airlift elements of the 16th Military Police Brigade out of Camp Bucca, Iraq. You'll also be proud to know that the BLT 3/8 Engineers pitched in to help out the Army by improving and expanding an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) training range that will benefit many units coming here to train in the future.

Our higher headquarters recently tasked us to provide airlift for about 600 airmen and soldiers stationed at Camp Bucca, following what was for many of them a six to eight month deployment. The MEU's efforts provided transportation support for the first leg of their journey to reunite them with their families and friends in the U.S. When their originally scheduled transportation faced technical difficulties, the MEU volunteered to support the MP's, who already were facing a two week extension on their stay in Iraq. Realizing the importance of this mission, the Marines of the MEU pulled together on short notice to develop and execute a plan to get these men and women safely into Kuwait and on their way home.

The Aviation Combat Element took the lead in planning and executing this mission and performed with precision. However, it wasn't just the pilots and aircrews who performed exceptionally. The ACE Maintenance Marines also took center stage and worked with intensity to ensure the "Raging Bulls" helicopters were operating at peak efficiency over the duration of the three day evolution. From the Marines who planned the lift to those on the ground providing security and communications, the mission went off without a hitch. The grateful expressions on the faces of those we supported best told the story of the impact of your Marines' and Sailors' efforts.

The BLT 3/8 Engineers made their own lasting impression on the ground during this period. Camp Buehring is an important training facility used to prepare troops from all branches of the armed forces for combat operations in Iraq. Although most of the training facilities here are first class, the Engineers noticed the poor condition of the Camp's IED training range and immediately went into action to correct deficiencies and improve the training experience for future warriors.

With sledgehammers and power tools in hand, the Engineers stormed the training lane and constructed new gun positions, upgraded other structures, and fabricated new plywood buildings to be used as props on the range. Beyond making improvements to the range, this initiative provided our Engineers an opportunity to get back to the basics of their trade. The upgraded training range was dedicated and "opened for business" on October 5th after our Engineers had completed their work.

With ease of access to phone, internet, and mail services aboard Camp Buehring, your Marines and Sailors are finding increased opportunities to keep in touch with you. We also have been the happy recipients of mail from family and friends. Every day, multiple pallets of letters and packages are delivered and sorted by our CLB-22 Marines. Nothing makes a Marine's or Sailor's day more fulfilling than receiving a simple letter or care package from loved ones, so I encourage you to keep the mail coming.

We now have passed into the third month of our deployment, and while we are keenly focused on the mission at hand, please know that we genuinely miss all of you. Be assured that our thoughts and prayers are with you as we carry out our nation's call to service on the other side of the world.

KEEPING INFORMED

Please remember, this web remains your best source of information on 22d MEU(SOC) activities. It will be updated regularly with stories and photographs of your Marines and Sailors.

You can also access our 24-hour hotline by calling 1-877-817-7322 (toll-free) or 910-451-8780 (Jacksonville, N.C. area) and pressing the number '4' at the prompt.

All official and factual information regarding the 22d MEU(SOC)'s movements, activities, and operations will come directly from me via this web site (www.usmc.mil/22ndmeu/), the MEU hotline, or the Key Volunteer Network. Other sources of information may be incorrect.

As always, we appreciate the sacrifice you make for us on a daily basis. I extend my warmest regards to you and yours. Semper Fidelis, and God bless all of you.

Sincerely,

Douglas M. Stilwell
Colonel, USMC
Commanding Officer